

Recd. April 19/55



Rev. J. May junior

Licester
Mass.

United States.

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Bridgewater March 28th 1853.

My dear Mr. May

You have been gaining ground I feel assured of late in the Anti-Slavery movement, or you would never have succeeded so gloriously in the opposition to Mr. Loring at Harvard. Few things that we have heard across the Atlantic of late afford me so great a change, as this rejection of the U. S. Commissioner. I am anxious to know the result of the application to your legislature with respect to his position as Judge of Probate. I can hardly think that he will be dismissed: the inconsistency of the course would be too glaring. It is all very well for you, for Wendell Phillips & for men who refuse to acknowledge the U. S. Constitution to speak as you do of Mr. Loring, but for those who vote under that specious document it is too bad. They themselves do not perhaps take so prominent a part in upholding the accursed system of slavery, and thus do not make themselves so obnoxious to public censure, but in principle they are guilty as Loring: they give their sanction to the law of which he permitted himself to become the willing tool, and in foro conscientiae I cannot think that they are the fit persons to condemn their brother. - How long will they blind themselves to the clear truth, that it is "the Union" itself which lies at the root of all the evil and upholds the law ^{against} which they express their dislike. I suppose the further they go in their inconsistency, the better, as they may be

all the sooner expected to find out their error. While
so many really good men on your side the waters seem to
shrink from the revolutionary cry of disunion, you must
not be surprisid that there are not many on this side who
do not go quite along with you. There is more theoretical
anti-slavery feeling here, that intelligent principle
on the subject, and as the evil is at so great a distance
from us, and as we especially have no direct-confrontation
over it, you will easily understand that it is not an
easy thing to keep up a continuous agitation on the
subject. ^(from her private) Your Society has had however the great
assistance of men thoroughly in earnest on the subject.
I do not know how we young workers are to show sufficient
our respect and esteem for those who have fought the
battle here in former days. The Estlins, N. Dwebbe
~~and others~~ have done wonders in keeping alive
the true principle in Gt Britain and Ireland:
They are indeed Sans peur et sans reproche. —
It is a painful thing that for a time so much doubt
has been thrown here on the consistency of one of your
dearest friends. — I must confess that I look on
George Thompson's conduct more leniently ~~than~~
now, when so much more evidence has come to
light than I did at first. — I do not say he has
acted as I could have wished; but I do not believe
that he has deserved those colours, for which in
times past he has made so many sacrifices.
That he did speak, that he did say something
like what appeared in the Empire I have no
doubt. We have the positive evidence of this

Whittier, Mr. Moore and Mr. James that he
said something of the kind, though they all think he
reports a little simplified. These are three witnesses
whose trustworthiness no one can doubt, and no
amount of evidence of a different kind of persons who
can only say they did not hear can be taken in opposition
to this is not evidence got up six weeks after the time for
I heard Mr. James on his return from London make the
same statement that he makes now. - I do not think
G. Thompson the great leader, that some of our friends
esteem him. He has not firmness enough, nor perseverance
either. He takes up things with much more zeal
than he exhibits in carrying them on, as I have had
reason to see, and I do not think he has a very keen
perception of the consideration which is due to those
persons with whom he comes into connection. - I do not
think his usefulness will be less now than it has ever
really been. When he appears on the platform he will be
as eloquent as ever, and as he now has gained
access to the friends, we may hope to see him influ-
encing their conduct by the power which he undoubtedly
fully possesses. - At the same time I think he will no
longer outweigh others in council, who if not gifted with
the eloquence he has, have what is perhaps more valuable
in the long run, clear sight, and unflinching perseverance.
I could not help thinking on reading a letter of yours
which Miss Estlin showed me, that you have an over-
estimate of the power of 222 Broad Street to injure

the Antislavery Cause. I asked Pillsbury & have your
dread, and as I cannot help saying it, decidedly
unjust to Mr. Chamerovyn, who has done a good work
since he has taken office in Scoble's place. Look at
the result. - Pillsbury was asked to speak at the May
anniversary in Exeter Hall. - Then came the celebrated
Liberator letter. Notwithstanding that, and although
the Broad Street Committee knew that if they called
a free conference, they would have their past sins
exposed, they gave their platform breadth enough to
hold our friends, and Pillsbury had free oppor-
tunity of showing the delinquencies of the Committee.
Is not this an advance? You go a head Americans
are accustomed to such very quick measures, that you
are hardly to estimate sufficiently the difficulties
that surround all attempts at progress in this con-
servative old England. - We move slowly, but if you
do see that we are moving, you may be quite sure
we are moving on steadily. Mr. Estlin joined the
British & Foreign Society ~~at~~ the same time that I did
and although we had not consulted one another it
was upon the same ground. We were so much
pleased with an address that the Committee issued
to the Churches in England, that we felt they
ought to be encouraged in the good path they had
entered upon. - This year again without consulting
we have as yet withheld our subscriptions
for the same reason, namely that we wish to
see the report they publish of the Conference.

If they give a fair account of the speeches of our friends, especially of Parker Pillsbury, they prove themselves desirous of doing good, and I for one shall send them my friend. If they do not but compromise I shall withhold it till they clearly prove themselves willing to act straightforwardly. You may be quite sure, sure one of the friends of the American Society in this country will in any way lessen the influence of your noble labours; but we feel that the British and Foreign A. S. Society has a sphere of usefulness which we cannot reach, while at the same time it can do no more harm to you. The character of its action is known, and no one will be deceived. —

If you were to see all the correspondence, Mr Chamberlayne has received, & perhaps you do, you would confess that he has not been treated to overmuch cordiality on the part of the Friends of the American Society. I have at times great misgivings that he has been more harshly dealt with than justice can defend. —

I have often said that I cannot think you can do better than keep an agent constantly in this country. You should have a man who is able to work privately and publicly, who knows when to be conciliatory & when to act as an oppressor upon evil. — If we could have a man of good orthodoxy in religious doctrine as well as in Antislavery it would be most useful, for we Englishmen are very suspicious of heretics as every Unitarian Minister finds out to his cost. — Parker Pillsbury has done much while he has been amongst us; in stirring up the enthusiasm of those with whom he has come into connection, and we shall ever think of him with gratitude. The self

denial that has led him through so many years of
tort & obloquy to devote himself to the great work
of Antislavery must render him valued indeed by
all who have the cause at heart. — But (and this I
^{quite confidently} write as a fact) that I should the bracket on page 2.) I
do not think he is exactly the man to be the agent in
England. He uses expressions that convey so wrong
an impression that half of his time would be employed
in explaining what he really means to say. I fancy he
has embroiled himself for ever with Channing, and
I cannot help saying I think he has been unjust
towards him. — I write this to you because I wish
you to form a fair estimate of our English position,
& I should not like you to form a wrong idea of the
Broad Street Secretary. — He has a French education,
and is therefore polite in the extreme: he compliments
you ad nauseam, but I believe he has the good of
the cause at heart. He has not the clearest views
I grant, and ~~imagines~~ frequently that differences
are healed by ignoring them. — This will prevent
his being as useful as he might be, were his
abilities quite unmarred by these defects, — but
he has already done much good, and I believe
will do much more. His temper is excellent. He
has stood unmoved by affronts that would have
aroused many a gentler man, and if he has
at last broken off communications with Pillsbury
I must say he has had provocation quite sufficient.

— Well now I have gone through our unpleasant
subjects of discussion. — I have spoken freely and
openly my own sentiments. I may be wrong but I have
not said anything which is not the fruit of mature
consideration. — You will no doubt be in receipt of equal
sincere communication from other friends, and
will be able to judge from all together. I thought it
might be useful for you to have the opinions of one
more earnest friend of the Anti-slavery Cause, and
have therefore inflicted a very long letter upon you.
I hope it has not been too great an intrusion upon your
valuable time. —

I was in Bristol last week, and dined with Mr
Estlin. Although the very cold weather has been un-
favourable to Mr Estlin, I was very much pleased to
find him in excellent spirits. He did me real good
to hear his cheerful merry ~~to~~ laugh — he joked with
us during dinner. His mind is clear as ever and
his interest in every good cause seems never to
flag. Miss Estlin and Mr. Mitchell also seemed
very well. — Our good friend Mr. James is also
improving in health. He is to preach again for the
first time next Sunday. I hope he will not
overcast himself, for men of his excellent
sense and good disposition are not found too
often among us. I also saw Mr. Armstrong who

was in better health than I had seen him in for
some time. He and I have both lately had some
communication with Hopkitt about his American
journey. - I hope in the ~~Atlas~~ newspapers, for which
he is going to write, we may see an improved
tone in dealing with the wrongs of the slave.

How is Mr. Garrison now? I was quite concerned to
hear of his bad health. I trust however, have quite recovered
by now. Remember me most cordially to Mrs. Follen
and Miss Weston. -

~~When~~ When next you send a parcel over to the
Country may I ask you to enclose for me copies
of the portraits of Antislavery, men that have
appeared. I have seen notices of portraits of Garrison
& of Phillips. If there are any more let me have
them please. I will send them price through
Mr. Webb.

And ever believe me most faithfully &
Sincerely yours

Alfred Stearns

Rev. S. May junr.